



**The White House Commission on Remembrance**

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## ***Our Mission***

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The White House Commission on Remembrance, established by Congress in 2000, is an independent, non-partisan government agency that encourages Americans to honor the sacrifices of our fallen and their families. It promotes acts of remembrance throughout the year and asks citizens to pay our debt of gratitude in memory of those who died in service to our country by giving something back to the Nation. The Commission is also tasked with sponsoring the *National Moment of Remembrance*, Public Law 106-579, which invites everyone to pause at 3:00 p.m. on Memorial Day in an uplifting act of national unity. In this shared remembrance, we have the chance to successfully connect as Americans.

The Commission is dedicated to educating current and future generations of Americans by providing a sense of history. In doing so, the sacrifices and the costs in human life made to preserve our liberties are uncovered, consequently instilling an understanding of what it means to be an American.

*Live Honoring America's Fallen*



## ***National Moment of Remembrance***

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Memorial Day began in 1868 to remember those killed in the Civil War. Since World War I, it has grown to become an American pastime, one that honors all those who died in service to our nation throughout history.

A Gallup Poll revealed that only 28% of Americans know the meaning of Memorial Day and most view it as a “day off” rather than a day to connect with our nation’s history by paying tribute to those who gave their lives for us. By formally establishing the *National Moment of Remembrance*, Congress asks the nation to join together to put the “Memorial” back in Memorial Day, promoting unity among Americans and reclaiming this holiday of reminiscence as the noble event for which it was intended.

Alone or with family and friends – observe the “*Moment*” at 3 p.m. on Memorial Day. Stop wherever you are to pause and think about those who paid for our freedom with their lives. Commit to give back to our country – *live honoring America’s fallen*.

Ask at least three others to remember to observe the “*Moment*” – members of your organization, family, friends, church, neighborhood, or other groups to which you belong or influence. Your participation in this shared remembrance will help to unite the country in demonstrating gratitude and respect for those who died so that we may live in freedom. The Commission accepts the task of making this special acknowledgment an American tradition.

“We want Americans to contemplate those things that bind us together. The legacy of those who died to make this country better – from the Revolutionary War to the present – is something that strengthens and unites us. We want every child to say, ‘I know why I am free and I know who died for my freedom.’”

Carmella LaSpada, Director of the  
Commission

### **Participants Include:**

At 3 p.m. local time, all Major League Baseball games halt, Amtrak train whistles sound across the country, and hundreds of other nationwide participants ask Americans to pause for the Memorial Day *National Moment of Remembrance*. Participants include: the National Grocers Association, the National Constitution Center, Empire State Building, Statue of Liberty, Greyhound, Liberty Bell, NASCAR, Port Authority of New York, and the International Space Station.

The National Association for Music Education, Bugles Across America, and the Getzen Instrument Company have arranged for volunteer buglers to play *Taps* for the “*Moment*” in places such as hospitals, retirement communities, national parks, thoroughbred race tracks, bus terminals, nursing homes, neighborhoods, and beaches. Echoes of remembrance resonate around the nation, uniting us all.



## ***Time of Remembrance***

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The *Time of Remembrance Tribute*, which takes place on the National Mall at the Washington Monument Grounds, brings together the families of America's fallen in Iraq and Afghanistan to acknowledge their enduring sacrifice. This is a unique national occasion as it is the only time that families from across the country have an opportunity to meet and share their experiences.

Although nothing can be said that will remove their pain or ease the burden of loss and grief, we believe that their sorrow is easier to bear knowing that they are not alone. Along with fostering connections between families whose loved ones died in service to our country, the event also successfully demonstrates that their fellow Americans care about their loss.

Approximately 3,000 family members from 47 states, Puerto Rico, the Virgin Islands, and Guam attend the *Time of Remembrance Tribute* each year. Our Nation's heritage of sacrifice is well represented by descendants of fallen heroes from every war dating back to 1776.

This ceremony has typically marked the beginning of Remembrance Week and culminates in the *National Moment of Remembrance* on Memorial Day.

### **Program Highlights**

- A Gold Medal Presentation to children of our fallen heroes
- Ringing of a replica of the Liberty Bell by wounded troops
- Family descendants of Nathan Hale (Revolutionary War), Henry Clay Jr. (Mexican War), Quentin Roosevelt (World War I), and the Sullivan Brothers (World War II), and fallen from the most recent conflicts
- Video Presentations produced by The History Channel especially for the Commission



## *The Gold Medal of Remembrance*

The *Gold Medal of Remembrance* is a very special memento that recognizes and honors the children who have recently lost a parent in service to our country. It effectively reminds everyone that casualties are found on the home front as well as on the battlefield. Designed by the Institute of Heraldry, which provides special services to the US Armed Forces, federal agencies, and the Office of the President, this uniquely beautiful medal and its associated certificate are a truly special American tradition.

The medal's gold denotes optimism and wisdom, and embodies the emotional riches gained from a close relationship with family and friends. The flame symbolizes remembrance, hope, and freedom. The laurel wreath is the ancient symbol of honor and victory, and the gold flame within a star is the official emblem of the White House Commission on Remembrance.

The ribbon's purple color represents the wounded heart of the child who has endured the loss of a parent, while the black line denotes reminiscence. Lastly, the red, white, and blue proudly represent the United States of America.

In the last two years, over 200 Gold Medals were presented to children of fallen service members from Operation Enduring Freedom and Iraqi Freedom. The first 180 of these were imparted at the *Time of Remembrance Tribute* on the National Mall in Washington D.C in 2006. Others are being given at special ceremonies across the nation and overseas throughout the year. The Commission on Remembrance aims to ensure every child in our country who has lost a mother or father receives this precious medal.

“As my four grandchildren grow up and continue to grieve the loss of their father at different ages and levels of understanding, I have no doubt they will look back on this very special tribute with a warm feeling in their hearts. They will keep those medals in a place of honor, and whenever they take them out and hold them in their hands, they will think of their dad and they will know how much our nation cared and appreciated the huge sacrifice that he made.”

Nancy Hecker  
Mother of Major William F. Hecker III





## *Sands of Remembrance*

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The *Sands of Remembrance* memorial was a historically accurate 30' x 30' life size sand sculpture located in Vierville-sur-Mer on Omaha Beach in Normandy, France. The project was initiated by the White House Commission on Remembrance and depicted soldiers landing in Normandy on D-Day. Commemorating the 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the historic date, this tribute marked the first time in history that such an endeavor has ever been undertaken.

The construction of the *Sands of Remembrance* was completed by a team of award-winning sand sculptors from the Allied Nations – Canada, France, the United Kingdom, and the United States – a group which was organized and led by sculptors John Gowdy (American) and Dale Murdock (Canadian). To create the momentous structure, they extracted 50 tons of sand from the five landing beaches: Gold, Juno, Omaha, Sword, and Utah, bringing them together as one.

The *Sands of Remembrance* successfully transformed the hallowed ground of these beaches as homage to the heroes who shed their blood for freedom 60 years ago. It was fashioned to serve as a uniquely symbolic and tangible reminder of the fallen soldiers of that day, one which deeply touched the thousands from around the world who came to see its majesty.

The sculpture was dedicated on May 30, 2004 and exhibited through June 6<sup>th</sup>. During the dedication, children from the Allied Nations recited a prayer written for the occasion called “Roll Call of Remembrance.” Each subsequent evening they participated in a Candlelight Remembrance, of which the burning flames were conduits to the memory of those who fell.

“The sands of time... the sands of a playground... the sands of Normandy. These sands link today’s young with those who valiantly stormed the beaches of northern France 60 years ago to liberate Europe and free the world of Nazi tyranny. That is why children were chosen to join the Commission in honoring the fallen for the dedication of this unique sand memorial. Heroes of the past... children of the future... linked by timeless sand.”

Carmella LaSpada  
Dedication of *Sands of Remembrance*  
Omaha Beach, May 31, 2004

Several partners were involved with making this great accomplishment possible, including Dear Abby, HBO, the International Union of Painters and Allied Trade, and the International Association of Iron Workers.

Currently, the Commission is actively engaging in a project to have *Sands of Remembrance* as a documentary to be entered into film festivals around the world.



## ***Annual Remembrance Tributes***

<i>October 3</i>	Operation Restore Hope (Somalia)
<i>October 12</i>	USS Cole Bombing
<i>October 23</i>	Beirut Terrorist Bombings
<i>October 25</i>	Operation Urgent Fury (Grenada)
<i>December 12</i>	Gander Air Disaster (Newfoundland)
<i>December 20</i>	Operation Just Cause (Panama)
<i>January 28</i>	Challenger Disaster
<i>February 27</i>	Gulf War
<i>April 19</i>	Oklahoma City Bombing
<i>April 25</i>	Iran Hostage Rescue Mission
<i>May 17</i>	USS Stark Attack
<i>May 21</i>	Time of Remembrance Tribute
<i><b>May 29</b></i>	<b>Memorial Day – National Moment of Remembrance</b>
<i>June 25</i>	Khobar Towers Bombing

### **Gulf War Anniversary Remembrance Tribute**



Participants included Kuwaiti Ambassador Sheikh Salem Abdullah Al Jaber Al-Sabah, Senator Chuck Hagel, Joint Chiefs of Staff Chairman General Pete Pace, USMC, and General Fred Franks, USA (Ret), Commander, VII U.S. Army Corps, Gulf War.

### **Challenger Anniversary Remembrance Tribute**



Space Shuttle Astronaut Colonel Carl Walz, USAF (Ret.) speaks at the 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Challenger Remembrance Tribute.

### **Gander Air Disaster Anniversary Remembrance Tribute**



Keynote Speaker Army Vice Chief of Staff General Richard Cody with the families of those honored.





## ***Staffing***

The Commission's authorizing legislation provides that four military officers and two federal employees be detailed "to assist the Commission in carrying out the act." Personnel are to be detailed from the Army, Navy, Air Force, and Marines, as well as from the Departments of Education and Veteran's Affairs.

Of the required six, only one has been assigned for 2007.

<b>Oct. 01, 2006– Sept. 30, 2007</b>		
<b>Staff Member</b>	<b>Full Time</b>	<b>Part Time</b>
Executive Director	1	
U.S. Army	0	0
U.S. Navy	0	0
U.S. Marine Corps	0	0
U.S. Air Force	0	0
Dept. of Veterans Affairs	1	
Dept. of Education	0	0

## ***Members of the Commission***

### **Voting Members**

- Four Presidential Appointees
- Secretary, Department of Defense
- Secretary, Department of Veterans Affairs
- Secretary, Department of Transportation
- Secretary, Department of Education
- Secretary, Department of Interior
- Administrator, General Services Administration
- Director, Office of Personnel Management
- Executive Director, Presidential Commission on White House Fellows

### **Non- Voting Members**

- Archivist, The National Archives
- Librarian, Library of Congress
- Director, Smithsonian Institution
- Secretary of the Army
- Secretary of the Navy
- Secretary of the Air Force
- Chief of Staff, U.S. Army
- Chief of Naval Operations
- Commandant of the Marine Corps
- Chief of Staff, U.S. Air Force
- Commandant, U.S. Coast Guard